

Malden Town Hall
(Old City Hall)
Intersection of Main and Pleasant Streets
Malden
Middlesex County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-979

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. MA-979

MALDEN TOWN HALL (Old City Hall)

Location: Intersection of Main Street and Pleasant Street,
Malden, Middlesex County, Massachusetts.

Present Owners: City of Malden

Present Occupants: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant: to be demolished, 1979.

Significance: The structure served as Malden's Town Hall (later City Hall) from 1857 until 1975. Designed by a Boston architect, it was the second brick building erected in the town. This prominent building, facing Malden Square, served as a focal point for community activity for many years. At different times it housed the local high school, the public library, the local police, and a series of dry goods stores in addition to town offices. The great hall on the second floor was used for town meetings and was rented out to local community and fraternal organizations. This is the oldest extant public building in Malden.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. History of Structure:

On November 4, 1856 a committee of seven men was chosen to purchase land and build a "Town House." In 1857 they purchased 11,600 square feet from the heirs of Isaac Hill and 214 square feet from Benjamin Hill for a total of \$5,000. Hill's Tavern, built in 1725 by Moses Hill stood on this land. It was moved in 1857 to the corner of Main Street and Irving Street. The committee engaged John Stevens, an architect from Boston, Massachusetts to design the new Town Hall. Jonathan Clark, a local carpenter, was given the contract to construct the building for \$17,430. The new Town Hall was dedicated on October 29, 1857. The total cost for construction and land was \$24,998.

The structure was used for a number of different functions. One of its first occupants was Phineas Sprague, the town treasurer, who ran a dry goods store in the north front room of the first floor. The south front room was originally occupied by the Town High School, until a school building was built in 1871. Malden's first free public library opened on the first floor of the building on February 14, 1879. Other dry goods stores occupied

the front rooms at various times. The large hall on the second floor was used for town meetings, and was rented to local organizations including the Masonic Lodge, the Malden Lyceum, and the Universalist Church. By 1868 there were five cells used as a local jail in the basement of the City Hall. It is not known when these were installed. Ten additional cells were installed later in the nineteenth century. A stairway from these cells led to the north rear office on the first floor which was occupied by the Malden Police until 1891, when they moved to the front of the building. The police moved from the City Hall in 1906 when a new station was built.

After Malden became a city in 1882, the building was extensively remodelled in order to adapt it to the needs of the new form of government. The "Joint Special Committee on Alterations of City Hall," chaired by Charles Davenport, was formed to oversee the renovation. Tristram Griffin, a local architect and a member of the Malden City Council, prepared the plans for the remodelling and supervised the labor. Contracts for renovation were given to W.B. Stinson and the Walworth Manufacturing Company. The building was painted and redecorated at this time. The report of appropriations for alterations includes bills from local individuals for painting, lettering doors, carpets, furniture, etc. In addition, new gas fixtures and electric attachments were installed. The old furnaces were replaced with steam heating apparatus. The total cost of renovation was \$12,298.67. The structure served as Malden's City Hall until 1975, when the city offices moved into the new City Hall, leaving it vacant.

B. Sources of Information:

1. Views of the structure:

Photograph of Malden City Hall, ca. 1900-1910, available from the Malden Public Library.

Lithograph of the building prior to 1883, source and artist unknown. (See HABS field records for photocopy.)

Four sheets of architectural measured drawings of Old City Hall, Malden, Massachusetts: West and South Elevations
East and North Elevations
Sections
Plot Plan

Robert B. Lunning, delineator, The Office of Bastille-Neiley, Architects 1975. Available from the office of Bastille-Neiley, Boston, Massachusetts.

2. Bibliography:

Hall, Mildred F. "History of Malden City Hall"
Malden Historical Society News, August 26, 1965.

The Massachusetts Department of Community Affairs Office of Local Assistance, Built to Last: A Handbook for Rehabilitating Old Buildings. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1977.

The National Register of Historic Places, Inventory-Nomination form for Malden City Hall (Old City Hall), October 8, 1976.

Randall, Ruth K. Malden - from Primitive Past to Progressive Present. Canaan, New Hampshire: Phoenix Publishing Co. for the Malden Historical Society, 1975.

"Report of the Joint Special Committee on Alterations to City Hall," Annual Report of the City of Malden for the Year 1883. Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, Printers, 1884.

Prepared by Emily J. Harris
Historic American
Buildings Survey
September 1979

from information
compiled by
The Malden Redevel-
opment Authority
Malden, Massachusetts
June 1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Malden City Hall is 55' by 85' with a three bay front. It is of brick with sandstone trim and a granite basement. As originally constructed, the structure was two-and-one-half stories with a high basement. On the facade, segmental pilasters flanked an arched, recessed central entrance. The first floor windows consisted of six arched three-light sections on either side of the door, extending over the entire width of the facade. The second story windows were set into recessed round arched panels and surmounted by round arches with sandstone label moldings. An oculus in the center of the pedimented gable lighted the attic. The cornice had Italiante brackets, dentils, and a wide plain entablature

The first floor had a central hallway running east and west. The front of the building was divided into two large stores. A central ten foot passageway led to three large rooms for town offices in the rear, one of which had a fire-proof brick vault for storage of town records. The first story was 12 feet in height.

Two circular stairways led to the second floor. This consisted of a main hall, 67 feet by 52 feet with 24 foot high ceilings. There were two ante-rooms on either side of the main entrance. A gallery projected nineteen feet into the hall. The hall seated up to 1,000 people. The attic, lighted by the oculus, contained a smaller hall, measuring 77 feet by 24 feet.

In 1883 the building was considerably altered. The arched windows flanking the first floor facade entrance were replaced with rectangular plate glass windows. The oculus on the pedimented gable was replaced with four conventional two-over-two light double hung sash windows. Large dormers with detailing similar to the facade gable were added to the south elevation. The interior of the building was also altered. The second floor was divided into two floors by extending and enclosing the gallery to create a third floor. The two ante-rooms retained their twenty-four foot ceilings. The second floor arched windows on the north and south elevations were extended up through the recessed panels surrounding them in order to provide light for the new third floor. The addition of the dormers and windows in the facade gable provided additional light and ventilation to the attic.

Other alterations included the addition of a brick vault tower to the rear elevation of the building and the construction of two entrances leading into the basement on the north and south elevations. The south entrance is reached by a short stairway covered with a segmental arched roof extending parallel to the building and the north entrance is cut directly into the north wall. A clock was installed in the center bay at the second-story level at an unknown date.

Prepared by Emily J. Harris
Historic American Buildings
Survey
September 1979

from information compiled by
The Malden Redevelopment
Authority
Malden, Massachusetts
June 1979
and
The National Register of
Historic Places
Inventory-Nomination Form
October 8, 1976.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the city of Malden, Malden Redevelopment Authority in compliance with Executive Order 11593 and a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort in the disposition and subsequent demolition of Malden City Hall. John A. Burns, AIA, was the HABS project coordinator. Photographs were taken on May 31, 1979 by David M. Levine. The written data was prepared in the HABS office by Emily J. Harris in September 1979, from information provided by the Malden Redevelopment Authority in June 1979 and The National Register of Historic Places, Inventory-Nomination Form for Malden City Hall (Old City Hall), dated October 8, 1976.